

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 02086 01 OF 03 301222Z  
ACTION SS-25

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2457  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
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AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
AHEMBASSY TEL AVIV 2164

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 DAMASCUS 2086

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: OVIP (ROCKEFELLER, NELSON)  
SUBJECT: ROCKEFELLER VISIT TO SYRIA

### 1. SUMMARY:

IN HIS TWO-DAY VISIT TO SYRIA, ROCKEFELLER HAD EXTENDED TALKS WITH BOTH ASAD AND KHADDAM. FONMIN AFFIRMED SYRIA'S READINESS TO WORK WITH U.S. IN SEARCH FOR PEACE BUT FELT ISRAEL HAD NO WILL FOR PEACE. PALESTINIAN IDENTITY IS DISTINCT FROM THAT OF OTHER ARABS AND WILL NOT DISAPPEAR. ARAFAT IS PALESTINIANS' ONLY SPOKESMAN. PALESTINIAN ENTITY MUST BE ESTABLISHED IN PALESTINE AND ITS TERRITORY NEGOTIATED IN THE PEACE CONFERENCE. KHADDAM DODGED QUESTION OF WHETHER SOME TYPE OF FEDERATION BETWEEN SYRIA, JORDAN, LEBANON AND A PALESTINIAN STATE MIGHT BE WAY TO CONTROL THREAT OF PALESTINIAN EXTREMISTS. ASAD ASKED WHO COULD SOUND OUT ISRAEL REGARDING ITS READINESS TO ACCEPT A JOINT JORDANIAN/PALESTINIAN NEGOTIATING TEAM AND AGREED THAT ONLY USG ABLE TO GET SUCH AN ANSWER FROM THE ISRAELIS.  
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KHADDAM'S REMARKS ARE PORTED AT LENGTH AS A PREVIEW OF POSITIONS HE IS LIKELY TO ADOPT DURING HIS WASHINGTON TALKS.  
END SUMMARY.

2. FORMER VICE PRESIDENT NELSON ROCKEFELLER ACCOMPANIED BY MRS. ROCKEFELLER VISITED SYRIA MARCH 27-29. SYRIANS TOOK PARTICULAR PAINS TO ARRANGE PRODUCTIVE VISIT,

INCLUDING CALLS ON ASAD AND KHADDAM. FONMIN HAD INVITED HIM TO DINNER THE NIGHT OF ARRIVAL BUT RETURNED TOO LATE FROM A ONE-DAY TRIP TO QATAR. DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER AL-KHANI ACTED AS HOST AND MINISTER OF PLANNING WAS AMONG GUESTS. ON HIS RETURN, KHADDAM INSISTED ON OFFERING WORKING LUNCHEON FOLLOWING DAY WHICH GOVERNOR AND AMBASSADOR ATTENDED. THAT EVENING, FOLLOWING GOVERNOR'S CALL ON PRESIDENT ASAD, AMBASSADOR AND MRS. MURPHY GAVE DINNER IN ROCKEFELLERS' HONOR, ATTENDED BY MINISTERS OF CULTURE AND EDUCATION AND PRESIDENTIAL POLITICAL ADVISOR. (MI DEFENSE HAD PLANNED ATTEND BUT WITHDREW WHEN SARG SCHEDULED COMMAND PERFORMANCE AT LAST MOMENT TO HONOR DEPARTING SOVIET AMBASSADOR.) SYRIANS PROVIDED CUSTOMARY TIGHT SECURITY THROUGHOUT VISIT. ONLY UNEXPECTED INCIDENT WAS WHEN SHOPPING IN SOUK, THE GOVERNOR WAS TAKEN FOR A SOVIET TOURIST.

3. AT WORKING LUNCHEON, KHADDAM MADE FOLLOWING POINTS:

A. PRESENT USG POLICY:

FONMIN OPENED WITH COMMENT THAT SYRIA AS YET HAD NO CLEAR INDICATION ABOUT ME POLICY OF NEW ADMINISTRATION. ROCKEFELLER REPLIED THAT HE A PRIVATE CITIZEN BUT HE BELIEVED PRESIDENT CARTER WAS STICKING HIS POLITICAL NECK OUT TO OBTAIN PEACE. PRESIDENT APPEARED TO BE ENGAGED IN MAJOR EFFORT TT EDUCATE U.S. PUBLIC OPINION O THE CORE MIDDLE EAST PROBLEMS. RABIN HAD TOLD ROCKEFELLER THAT THIS WOULD GIVE CARTER CHANCE TO SAY LATER IF AGREEMENT IOULD NOT BE REACHED, "IT IS NOT MY FAULT." ROCKEFELLER SAID HE HAD CONFIDENTIAL

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CAUTIONED RABIN THAT ON OTHER HAND SHOULD CARTER GET IMPRESSION ANY ONE PARTY IS NOT SERIOUSLY TRYING FOR PEACE, THEN PRESIDENT MIGHT GO BACK TO AMERICAN PEOPLE AND SAY FLATLY WHERE RESPONSIBILITY LAY. WERE ISRAEL CONSIDERED AT FAULT, THIS MIGHT SHARPEN QUERIES WHY U.S. WAS GIVING IT SO MUCH AID.

B. ISRAELI ATTITUDE TOWARDS PEACE:

RABIN TOLD ROCKEFELLER ISRAEL WANTED DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS WITH ITS ARAB NEIGHBOR STATES, THAT IT WOULD NOT TALK WITH THE PLO AND THAT IT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO HAVE AN UNDERSTANDING ABOUT THE PEACE PROCESS WITH USG. EIRECTOR OF NORTH AMERICAN AFFAIRS AT THE ISRAELI FONMINISTRY HAD, HOWEVER, OBSERVED THAT IF U.S. AND ISRAEL COULD NOT REACH SUCH AN UNDERSTANDING THEN ISRAEL WOULD HAVE TO ACCEPT THE U.S. VIEWS ON THE PEACE PROCESS. KHADDAM REPLIED THAT SYRIA AND THE OTHER ARAB STATES APPRECIATE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PEACE FOR THEMSELVES AND FOR THE

WORLD. THEY WANT TO COOPERATE IF POSSIBLE WITH THE USG  
IN THE SEARCH FOR PEACE. THEY HAVE ALREADY EXERTED CONSIDERABLE  
EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF PEACE BUT ISRAEL REMAINS INTRANSIGENT.  
WHAT IS ISRAEL'S OBJECTIVE? IF IT IS PEACE, THIS IS BEING  
OFFERED. KHADDAM ASSERTED THAT ISRAELIS ENDLESSLY COMPLICATE  
PROCEDURAL ISSUES IN THE PEACE PROCESS, IN ORDER TO CONCEAL  
THEIR BASICALLY EXPANSIONISTIC PLANS.

C. ISRAELI ATTITUDES TOWARDS SYRIA:

ROCKEFELLER NOTED THAT ISRAELIS HAD EXPRESSED TO  
HIM SATISFACTION OVER SYRIAN POLICY IN LEBANON, DESCRIBING  
DAMASCUS AS HAVING ACTED WITH A "CLEAR VISION."  
ISRAELIS SAID THAT THEY WERE READY TO NEGOTIATE WITH SYRIA,  
EGYPT AND JORDAN AND HOPED THAT JORDAN WOULD INTEGRATE  
PALESTINIANS INTO ITS NEGOTIATING TEAM.

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D. PALESTINIAN IDENTITY:

KHADDAM REPLIED THAT TO QUESTION INDEPENDENT  
PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION AT GENEVA IS ANOTHER ISRAELI  
PRETEXT. THE CORE OF THE MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM IS PALESTINIAN  
ISSUE. IT IS INCONCEIVABLE THAT A MIDDLE EAST SOLUTION CAN BE  
ACHIEVED WITHOUT ITS SOLUTION. THE PALESTINIAN IDENTITY  
WILL NOT DISAPPEAR. AFTER 30 YEARS, THE NEARLY 300,000  
PALESTINIANS IN SYRIA STILL SEE THEMSELVES AS A DISTINCT  
GROUP. THE SAME SITUATION PREVAILS IN JORDAN AND LEBANON.  
TO TRY TO MAKE A PEOPLE DISAPPEAR CONTRADICTS LOGIC AND  
HISTORY. "IF AN AMERICAN JEW CANNOT DISAPPEAR INTO THE  
AMERICAN POPULATION, AND WILL ACCEPT DIRECTION FROM THE  
ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER--OVER THE HEAD OF THE AMERICAN  
GOVERNMENT--THEN HOW CAN ONE EXPECT A PALESTINIAN TO DIS-  
APPEAR? IF A EUROPEAN JEW FEELS LOYALTY TO ISRAEL RATHER  
THAN TO HIS OWN COUNTRY, HOW CAN WE ASK A PALESTINIAN TO  
BE LOYAL TO SYRIA AND NOT HIS OWN COUNTRY?"

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ACTION SS-25

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R 301134Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2458

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 3 DAMASCUS 2086

EXIDS

E. PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION:

ROCKEFELLER ASKED WHAT FORMULAS SYRIA HAD IN MIND TO SATISFY THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM. KHADDAM REPLIED THERE IS NO PROBLEM IF ISRAEL HAS THE WILL FOR PEACE. THE UN HAD RECOGNIZED THE PLO AS THE PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATIVE. IN TODAY'S WORLD FOUR TIMES AS MANY STATES RECOGNIZE THE PLO AS HAD ORIGINALLY RECOGNIZED ISRAELI INDEPENDENCE. THIS WAS TWICE THE NUMBER OF STATES WHICH RECOGNIZED ISRAEL TODAY. THE UNSC HAD RECOGNIZED THE PLO AND INVITED IT TO PARTICIPATE IN ALL MATTERS RELATING TO THE MIDDLE EAST. IT IS ONLY ISRAEL WHICH BLOCKS A SOLUTION BY SAYING IT WILL NOT GO TO GENEVA IF THE PLO ATTENDS BECAUSE THE PLO DOES NOT RECOGNIZE ISRAEL. RABIN, KHADDAM ASSERTED, HAD TOLD WALDHEIM "WE NEITHER WANT TO RECOGNIZE THE PLO NOR THE PLO TO RECOGNIZE US." WHY SHOULD ISRAEL REFUSE TO MEET WITH THE PLO, WHILE IT IS READY TO SIT WITH EGYPT, JORDAN AND SYRIA WHICH THEMSELVES DO NOT RECOGNIZE ISRAEL? THE PLO HAD SAID IT WANTS TO SECURE ITS RIGHTS ON THE BASIS OF UNGA RES. 3236. CONFIDENTIAL

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THIS MEANS THE PALESTINIANS ARE READY TO ACT THROUGH "INTERNATIONAL LEGALITY." THEY ARE NOT RPT NOT SAYING THEY WANT TO DESTROY ISRAEL BUT THEY DO WANT THEIR RIGHTS. THIS WAS WHY SYRIA BELIEVED IF THERE IS A SERIOUS WILLINGNESS IN ISRAEL TO ESTABLISH PEACE THE MATTER IS VERY SIMPLE. CONVERSELY, IT WILL BE VERY COMPLICATED IF THERE IS NO WILLINGNESS FOR PEACE. WHILE THE PRESENT TREND IN THE AREA IS TOWARDS PEACE, IF THIS TREND FAILS, THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE WILL BE EXTREMISM. ISRAEL MIGHT HAVE AN INTEREST IN SEEING EXTREMISM PREVAIL IN THE ARAB COUNTRIES. BUT, IF SO, WE MUST ALL RECOGNIZE THAT NEITHER PETROLEUM NOR THE ARAB OIL REGIMES THEMSELVES WILL BE SAFE FROM EXTREMISM.

F. PALESTINIAN TERRITORY: ROCKEFELLER ASKED WHAT TERRITORY WILL SATISFY THE PALESTINIANS AS WELL AS THE ARAB STATES. FIRST, KHADDAM REPLIED, THE TERRITORY MUST BE IN PALESTINE AND NOT IN ANY ARAB STATE. SECOND, THE TERRITORY MUST BE DEFINED IN THE PEACE CONFERENCE, "IF WE TALK OF IT NOW, THIS WILL AFFECT OVERALL DISCUSSIONS ABOUT PEACE AND GIVE A PRETEXT TO CERTAIN PARTIES TO UNDERMINE MOVES TOWARDS PEACE." ROCKEFELLER SAID THAT HE SAW THE WEST BANK AND GAZA AS THE ONLY POSSIBLE ELEMENTS OF A PALESTINIAN STATE AND OBSERVED THAT OBVIOUSLY THE USG IN ITS TALKS ON THIS POINT WILL WANT TO GET AWAY FROM GENERALITIES. KHADDAM SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THIS BUT USG IN TURN MUST UNDERSTAND THAT SYRIA DOES NOT REPRESENT THE PALESTINIANS AND CANNOT TALK FOR THEM. ANY ARAB OFFICIAL WHO CLAIMS TO TALK ON BEHALF OF THE PALESTINIANS IS MISLEADING HIS INTERLOCUTOR. ARAFAT IS THE ACCEPTED LEADER; WHY NOT TALK TO HIM? THE CLOSENESS OF SYRO-PALESTINIAN RELATIONS WERE WELL-KNOWN AND DAMASCUS HAD GIVEN THE PALESTINIANS AN AMOUNT OF ASSISTANCE UNMATCHED BY OTHERS. NEVETHELESS, SYRIA HAD HAD ITS DIFFERENCES WITH THE PALESTINIANS, THIS IS BECAUSE THEY REFUSE THE TUTELAGE OF ANY ARAB COUNTRY. PALESTINIANS WILL DISAVOW ANY SOLUTION WHICH IS REACHED WITHOUT THEIR PARTICIPATION. ON THE OTHER HAND, CONFIDENTIAL

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PALESTINIANS ARE NOT RPT NOT EXTREMISTS. "THEY ARE FED UP WITH THEIR MISERABLE LIFE. THEY WANT A STATE AND HOMELAND OF THEIR OWN. THE LEBANESE EVENTS ARE A GOOD EXAMPLE OF THE COMPLEXES AFFLICTING THE PALESTINIANS."

G. ARAFAT: ROCKEFELLER NOTED THAT CROWN PRINCE HASSAN HAD GIVEN HIM THE IMPRESSION THAT ARAFAT DOES NOT REPRESENT PALESTINIANS OF EITHER THE WEST BANK OR THE EAST BANK AND HAD REFERRED TO FIVE DIFFERENT CATEGORIES OF PALESTINIANS. KHADDAM REPLIED, "THIS IS NOT VERY PRECISE. ARAFAT REPRESENTS ALL PALESTINIANS; HE WAS ELECTED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE PALESTINIAN NATIONAL COUNCIL." KHADDAM SAID HE TOOK THIS STAND DESPITE THE FACT THAT SYRIAN RELATIONS WITH ARAFAT WERE DIFFICULT.

RIGHT OF RETURN:

ROCKEFELLER NOTED THAT CHARLES MALIK HAD PREDICTED THAT IF PALESTINIANS GET AN INDEPENDENT STATE, VERY FEW WOULD LEAVE LEBANON FOR THAT STATE. FONMIN REPLIED THERE WAS NO ONE IN THE WORLD WHO DID NOT WANT TO RETURN TO HIS HOMELAND. ANY PALESTINIANS WHO COULD RETURN WOULD DO SO. FOR SAKE OF AREA PEACE, IT WAS CERTAINLY PREFERABLE THAT A PALESTINIAN RETURN THAN ADDITIONAL SOVIET JEWS GO TO

PALESTINE. ROCKEFELLER SAID THAT HE WAS NOT QUESTIONING THEIR RIGHT TO RETURN. HIS QUESTION WAS: IF PALESTINIANS WERE BETTER OFF IN SYRIA OR IN LEBANON, WOULD THEY NOT PREFER TO STAY IN THOSE COUNTRIES? HUSSEIN HAD TOLD HIM THAT PALESTINIANS IN JORDAN WOULD LIKELY GO TO PALESTINE TO BUY BURIAL PLOTS BUT CONTINUE TO WORK IN JORDAN. KHADDAM REPLIED "IN ANY CASE, THE PRINCIPLE OF THE RIGHT TO RETURN MUST BE ESTABLISHED. THE EXECUTION OF THIS RIGHT WOULD BE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION." (SIC)

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2459

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

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AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 3 OF 3 DAMASCUS 2086

EXDIS

I. ARAB FEDERATION: ROCKEFELLER OBSERVED THAT ISRAELIS WERE CONCERNED ABOUT RADICAL ELEMENTS AMONG THE PALESTINIANS. DID FONMIN FORESEE ANY POSSIBILITY FOR A FEDERATION BETWEEN JORDAN, SYRIA, LEBANON AND A PALESTINIAN STATE WHICH WOULD HELP CURB EXTREMIST GROUPS. KHADDAM REPLIED, SYRIA WAS INSTINCTIVELY UNIONIST AND ALL ARAB CITIZENS SUPPORTED A BROADER POLITICAL FRAMEWORK WHICH WOULD DEVELOP THE ARAB PEOPLE AND ELIMINATE THEIR BACKWARDNESS. "BUT WE DO NOT DISCUSS SUCH A MATTER AS A WAY TO PROVIDE SECURE BOUNDARIES FOR ISRAEL."

4. MEETING WITH ASAD:

AT GOVERNOR'S REQUEST, ROCKEFELLER MET PRIVATELY WITH ASAD. HE TOLD AMBASSADOR AFTERWARDS THAT HE HAD COVERED SUBSTANTIALLY SAME GROUND WITH PRESIDENT AS HE HAD WITH

FONMIN. HE SAID WAS PARTICULARLY STRUCK BY FACT THAT  
IN CONTRAST TO KHADDAM, ASAD APPEARED TO HAVE NO INHIBITIONS ABOUT  
DISCUSSING PROSPECT OF A JOINT JORDANIAN/PALESTINIAN NEGOTIATING  
TEAM OR FUTURE FEDERAL ARRANGEMENTS IN THIS AREA. ASAD HAD  
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ASKED HIM WHETHER HE THOUGH ISRAEL WOULD ACCEPT SUCH A  
JORDIAN/PALESTINIAN TEAM IF JORDAN WERE WILLING TO  
ACCEPT THE RESPONSIBILITY. ROCKEFELLER HAD REPLIED THAT HE FIRST OF  
ALL THOUGH ARABS WOULD HAVE TO MAKE THEIR SUPPORT FOR  
HUSSEIN ABSOLUTELY CLEAR BEFORE THE KING WOULD AGREE TO  
SUCH AN ENDEAVOR. HUSSEIN WAS CONCERNED ABOUT DANGER  
OF ACCEPTING RESPONSIBILITY FOR SUCH NEGOTIATIONS.  
"HOW COULD ONE FIND OUT THE REAL ISRAELI VIEWS ON THIS?"  
ASAD ASKED. ROCKEFELLER REPLIED "ONLY IF THE USG WERE TO RAISE  
THE ISSUE WITH THE ISRAELIS." ASAD REPORTEDLY AGREED THAT  
THIS WOULD BE THE KEY.

5. COMMENT:

ASAD'S EVIDENT INTEREST IN DETERMINING "REAL" ISRAELI  
POSITIONS MAY BE A CLUE TO THE EVOLUTION OF HIS THINKING AND  
WILL BE WORTH PROBING. KHADDAM'S WILLINGNESS TO ACKNOWLEDGE  
SYRIAN DIFFERENCES WITH ARAFAT WAS AS STRIKING AS HIS ASSERTION THAT  
ARAFAT WAS THE ONLY PALESTINIAN LEADER WITH WHOM THE USG SHOULD DEAL.  
OTHERWISE, THE THRUST OF KHADDAM'S PRESENTATION IS THAT IS  
WASHINGTON'S PROBLEM RATHER THAN THE ARABS' TO HANDLE THE PLO.

6. ROCKEFELLER SAID HE WOULD SEEK MEETING WITH SECRETARY  
TE RELAY HIS IMPRESSIONS OF HIS TALKS IN SYRIA AND  
IN THE OTHER AREA CAPITALS.  
MURPHY

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